

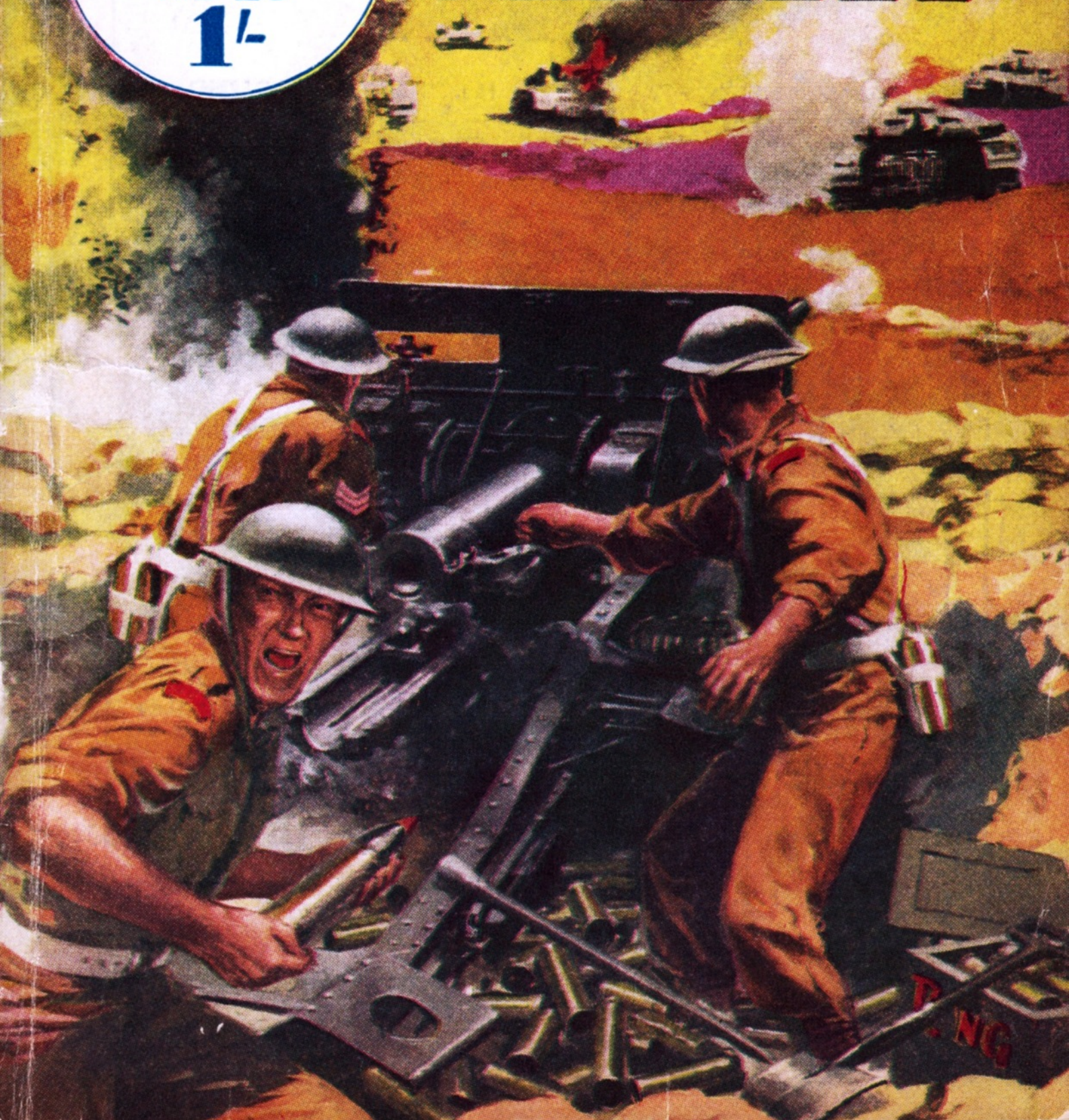
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NO 29

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TANK ALERT



TANK ALERT

THIS IS THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S WAR. A WAR FOUGHT OVER A BATTLEFIELD A THOUSAND MILES LONG -- THE HOSTILE WESTERN DESERT OF NORTH AFRICA.

UNDER GENERAL WAVELL'S MAGNIFICENT LEADERSHIP, A FORCE OF ONLY 30,000 MEN HAD ROUTED THE FLOWER OF MUSSOLINI'S ARMY. THOUSANDS OF ITALIANS RUSHED TOWARDS EGYPT -- BUT WITH THEIR HANDS HIGH ABOVE THEIR HEADS!

IT LOOKS AS THOUGH THE WHOLE EYDIE ARMY'S PACKED IN!

HOPE SO -- THEN WE CAN ALL GO HOME!

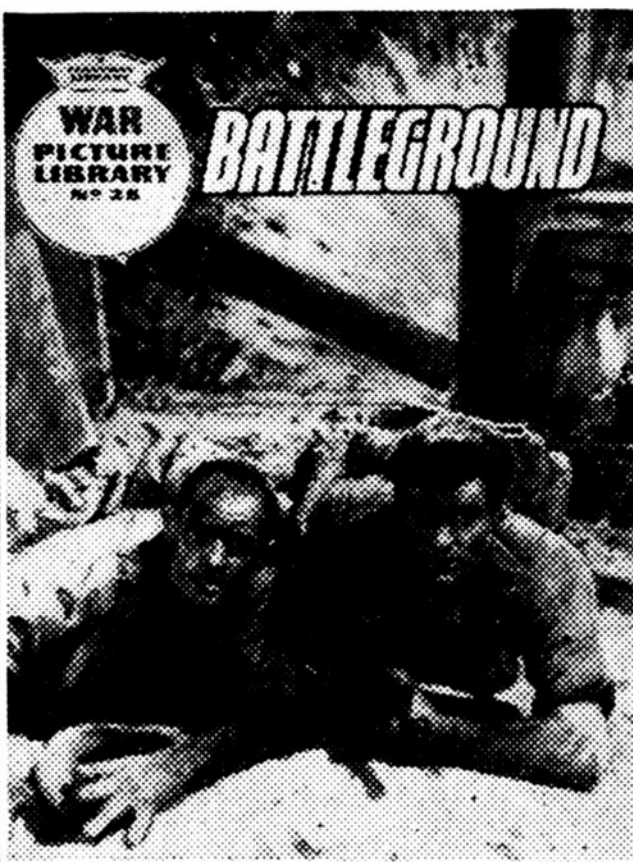
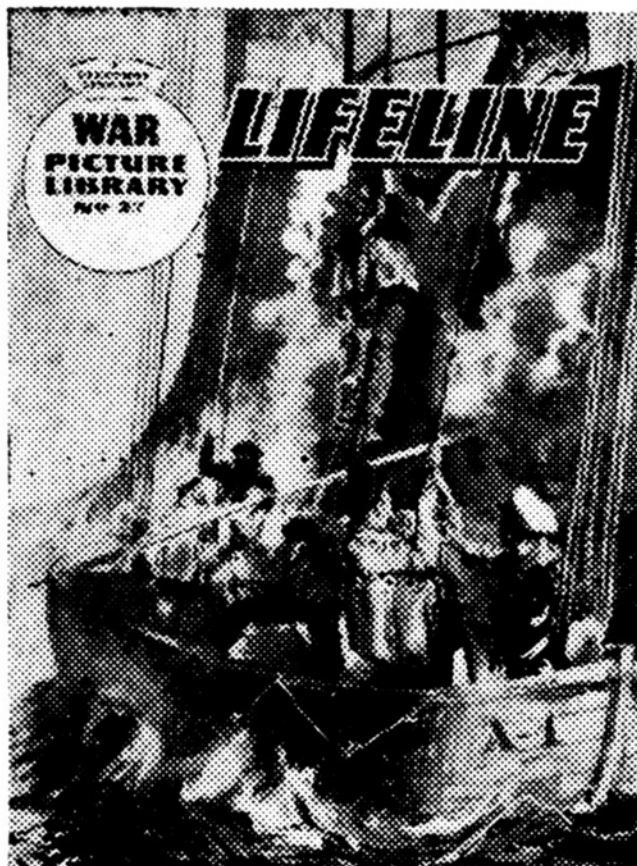


ALSO ON SALE NOW

WAR PICTURE LIBRARY

No. 27 LIFELINE

No. 28 BATTLEGROUND



To be attacked and not be able to hit back—such was the lot of the men of the Merchant Navy who carried the life-giving food and war materials through enemy-infested seas to beleaguered Britain.

The Special Air Service operated deep behind the enemy lines, sabotaging, ambushing and gathering vital information. This is the story of one of those fearless groups of warriors on wheels.

TOLD IN THRILL-PACKED PICTURES

NEXT MONTH'S three exciting issues are :—

No. 30 SOLDIER OF FORTUNE

No. 31 BEACH-HEAD

No. 32 CONVOY

Chapter 1. NEW ARRIVALS

BUT THE ITALIAN JACKAL, MUSSOLINI, RAISED A HOWL TO HIS NAZI MASTER FOR AID, AND HE DID NOT PLEAD IN VAIN. HITLER AT ONCE SENT A POWERFUL GERMAN ARMY, SPECIALLY TRAINED AND EQUIPPED FOR DESERT WARFARE. IT WAS THE AFRIKA KORPS... AND IN COMMAND WAS ONE OF HITLER'S MOST BRILLIANT GENERALS, ROMMEL!



THE AFRIKA KORPS THRUST ARROGANTLY INTO THE DESERT WITH A MIGHTY FORCE OF PANZERS, HEAVY ARTILLERY AND DIVE BOMBERS. BETWEEN THEM AND THE GLITTERING PRIZE OF EGYPT STOOD A SMALL BUT HEROIC FORCE OF BRITISH AND COMMONWEALTH TROOPS, SHORT OF SUPPLIES, SHORT OF GUNS AND TANKS — SHORT OF EVERYTHING BUT COURAGE!





A UNIT THAT ROMMEL SOON LEARNED TO FEAR WAS THE MAGNIFICENT TIGER DIVISION OF INDIA.

MADE UP EQUALLY OF INDIAN AND BRITISH TROOPS, THE TIGER DIVISION WAS A TRUE BROTHERHOOD OF WARRIORS.

THERE WERE BEARDED SIKHS... EAGLE-EYED PATHANS FROM THE NORTH-WEST FRONTIER... RAJPUTS... PUNJABIS... MAHRATTAS... GURKHAS... ALL BORN TO THE TRADE OF SOLDIERING. TO THESE MEN, DEATH IN BATTLE WAS THE SUPREME GLORY.

SIDE BY SIDE WITH THEM MARCHED INFANTRY AND GUNNERS FROM BRITAIN... DOUR HIGHLANDERS... CHIRPY COCKNEYS... HARDY WELSHMEN. IN THE TIGER DIVISION WERE SKINS OF EVERY SHADE, DOZENS OF LANGUAGES, CASTES AND RELIGIONS. YET THE UNIT WORKED AS SMOOTHLY AS A GREAT MACHINE -- BECAUSE THE MEN IN IT WERE BROTHERS-IN-ARMS -- UNITED IN THE CAUSE OF FREEDOM.



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LIKE A MIGHTY STEAMROLLER, ROMMEL'S AFRIKA KORPS ROLLED ACROSS LIBYA...OVER THE EGYPTIAN BORDER. BUT THERE IT PAUSED, FOR THE GALLANT EIGHTH ARMY HAD MADE THE GERMANS PAY DEARLY FOR THEIR GAINS. THE TIGER DIVISION, TOO, LICKED ITS WOUNDS AND GOT DOWN TO PLANNING A COUNTER ATTACK.

WE'RE GOING TO HIT ROMMEL -- **HARD!** WE'LL PUSH HIM OUT OF EGYPT, BACK INTO THE DESERT, AND DESTROY HIM THERE!



GOOD SHOW, SIR! THE LADS ARE KEEN TO HAVE ANOTHER GO AT THE AFRIKA KORPS!

ON THE DESERT ROAD OUTSIDE ALEXANDRIA, A YOUNG BRITISH SOLDIER, ONLY A FEW WEEKS OUT FROM ENGLAND, WAS HITCH-HIKING HIS WAY TO THE FORWARD AREA. SHY AND SLIGHTLY BUILT, YOUNG DICK GORDON DID NOT LOOK THE STUFF OF WHICH HEROES ARE MADE. YET FATE HAD DESTINED HIM FOR A PLACE IN THE RANKS OF MEN WHOSE HERITAGE WAS BATTLE.

THIS IS AS FAR AS I GO, CHUM. YOU'LL GET ANOTHER LIFT EASY ENOUGH -- JUST TELL THE DRIVER THE MOB YOU'RE GOING TO.



I'VE BEEN POSTED TO THE THIRTY-THIRD FIELD ARTILLERY.

THE R.A.S.C. DRIVER WHO HAD GIVEN DICK A LIFT FROM THE DEPOT WHISTLED...

TWENTY-FIVE POUNDSERS! TOUGH MOB, THAT. THEY GOT A RIGHT BASHING IN THE LAST PUSH -- IN FACT THEY USUALLY COP IT. GOOD LUCK, MATE!

THANKS FOR THE RIDE.



BUT AS DICK WAITED FOR A LIFT BY THE DUSTY ROADSIDE, IT WAS NOT THE THOUGHT OF ACTION THAT WORRIED HIM. IT WAS THE FEAR THAT HE MIGHT BE FOUND WANTING BY THE BATTLE-HARDENED VETERANS HE WAS TO JOIN. SOON A JEEP PULLED UP BESIDE HIM, AND THE OFFICER DRIVING IT HAILED HIM CHEERFULLY.



AS THE JEEP SPED ALONG, DICK LEARNED THAT LIEUTENANT JIM BLAIR WAS BEING NEWLY-POSTED TO THE REGIMENT, TOO. THE YOUNG GUNNER'S HEART LIFTED AS HE REALISED THAT HE WOULD NOT BE THE ONLY ROOKIE IN THE UNIT -- EVEN THOUGH THE OTHER WAS AN OFFICER.



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JIM BLAIR'S MOUTH SET IN A GRIM LINE AS HE RECALLED THE REASON FOR HIS OVERSEAS POSTING. HE HAD BEEN VIRTUALLY KICKED OUT! A FEW MONTHS AGO, JIM AND HIS BROTHER, BILL, HAD BEEN TRAINING TOGETHER AS PARATROOPERS. IT WAS THEIR FIRST JUMP. THE INSTRUCTOR CALLED BILL'S NUMBER AND HE PAUSED FOR A SECOND IN THE DOORWAY...



SO-LONG, JIM.
SEE YOU DOWN
THERE!

YOU
BET!

THIRTEEN--
JUMP!
READY,
FOURTEEN?

NUMBER
FOURTEEN...
JUMP!

THEN, POISED IN THE DOORWAY, JIM SAW IT HAPPEN! BILL'S CHUTE STARTED TO OPEN-- THEN STUCK-- AND JIM WATCHED HIS BROTHER HURTLE TO HIS DEATH!

NO,
BILL--
NO!

JIM'S NUMBED MIND DID NOT HEAR THE INSTRUCTOR'S COMMAND. AS THE OTHER TRAINEES LEAPED INTO SPACE, JIM SAT DAZEDLY IN THE PLANE.



THAT WAS
MY BROTHER!
I SAW HIM
DIE!

I'M SORRY, CHUM,
BUT I'VE STILL GOT
TO REPORT THAT
YOU REFUSED TO
JUMP AND YOU KNOW
WHAT THAT MEANS!

JIM KNEW ONLY TOO WELL. A TRAINEE WHO REFUSED TO JUMP ~ WHATEVER THE REASON ~ WAS R.T.U., RETURNED TO UNIT ~ NOT UP TO REQUIRED STANDARD. AND UNITS DID NOT WELCOME BACK R.T.U. FAILURES. JIM FOUND HIMSELF ON THE FIRST OVERSEAS DRAFT ~ WITH A STIGMA THAT HE WAS DETERMINED TO WIPE OUT! AS THE JEEP SWUNG ON TO THE GUN-PARK OF THE THIRTY-THIRD REGIMENT, JIM'S HEART THROBBED SAVAGELY AT THE SIGHT OF THE VICIOUS LOOKING TWENTY-FIVE POUNDER GUNS. WITH LUCK, HE WOULD SOON HAVE THE CHANCE TO REMOVE THE SHADOW OF SHAME THAT HUNG OVER HIM.



AT REGIMENTAL H.Q. THE TWO NEWCOMERS REPORTED TO COLONEL GOLD, THE COMMANDING OFFICER.





OUTSIDE THE COLONEL'S TENT, THE TWO NEW ARRIVALS TOOK TEMPORARY LEAVE OF EACH OTHER. WHATEVER THE DIFFERENCE IN RANK, SOMEHOW EACH SENSED THAT HE HAD FOUND A FRIEND IN THE OTHER.



AS DICK PICKED UP HIS KIT AND TURNED TOWARDS THE GUNNERS' LINE, HE CANNONED FULL INTO BATTERY SERGEANT-MAJOR BULLER.



WHERE THE BLAZES ARE YOU GOING? CAN'T YOU USE YOUR EYES...YOU DOZY MAN?

S-SORRY, SIR!

THE SERGEANT-MAJOR'S BARK WAS WORSE THAN HIS BITE. HE SOON SAW THAT DICK WAS FIXED UP WITH A MEAL -- THEN INTRODUCED HIM TO HIS NEW COMRADES.



THIS IS GORDON -- JUST OUT FROM BLIGHTY. HE'LL BE THE NUMBER FOUR ON YOUR GUN -- SO LOOK AFTER HIM!

RIGHT, SAR-MAJOR! GLAD TO KNOW YOU, KID -- I'M TOM RODD.

DICK GAZED AT THE RETREATING BACK OF THE SERGEANT-MAJOR IN CONSTERNATION. HE HAD NEVER BEEN ON A GUN BEFORE IN HIS LIFE!

BUT -- BUT I WAS TRAINED AS A SIGNALLER! I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT GUN-DRILL.



IT'S GUNNERS WE'RE SHORT OF, CHUM -- SO A GUNNER YOU ARE. ANYWAY, NUMBER FOUR ONLY HAS TO PUSH THE SHELL UP THE SPOUT. WE'LL LOOK AFTER YOU!

MAYBE HE'S AFRAID OF THE NASTY BANG IT MAKES!

Tank Alert

DICK FLUSHED FOR THE JIBE WAS PARTLY TRUE. HE HAD ALWAYS HATED LOUD EXPLOSIONS -- AND HE KNEW THAT THE TWENTY-FIVE POUNDER HAD A SPECIALLY VICIOUS, EAR-SPLITTING CRACK.

GIVE THE KID A BREAK, TUG. WE ALL HAD TO START -- AND I REMEMBER YOUR FIRST TIME ON A GUN. YOU HAD YOUR HANDS OVER YOUR EARS ALL THE TIME, AND MISSED AN ORDER!

DON'T WORRY ABOUT TUG WILSON, DICK. HIS PAL WAS KILLED IN THE LAST PUSH -- AND YOU'RE TAKING HIS PLACE.

I SEE.



THE THIRTY-THIRD HAD BEEN PULLED BACK FOR A REFIT AND FROM CRACK OF DAWN TILL NIGHTFALL -- AND OFTEN AFTER -- THE WHOLE REGIMENT WAS HARD AT WORK -- TRAINING. THE FRIENDLINESS OF THE GUNNERS SOON DISPELLED DICK'S SHYNESS AND UNDER THE STRENUOUS TRAINING, HIS BODY GREW HARD AND LEAN. THERE WAS KEEN RIVALRY BETWEEN THE GUN-TEAMS, AND DICK'S HEART SWELLED WITH PRIDE WHEN HIS SECTION WON THE REGIMENTAL GUN-DRILL CONTEST.

NUMBER ONE GUN READY!

THEY WIN THE CONTEST!

THAT NEW REPLACEMENT SEEMS TO BE SHAPING WELL!



LATER THE VICTORIOUS GUN-TEAM RELAXED.

I RECKON WE EARNED THIS. I COULD DO GUN-DRILL IN MY SLEEP, NOW!

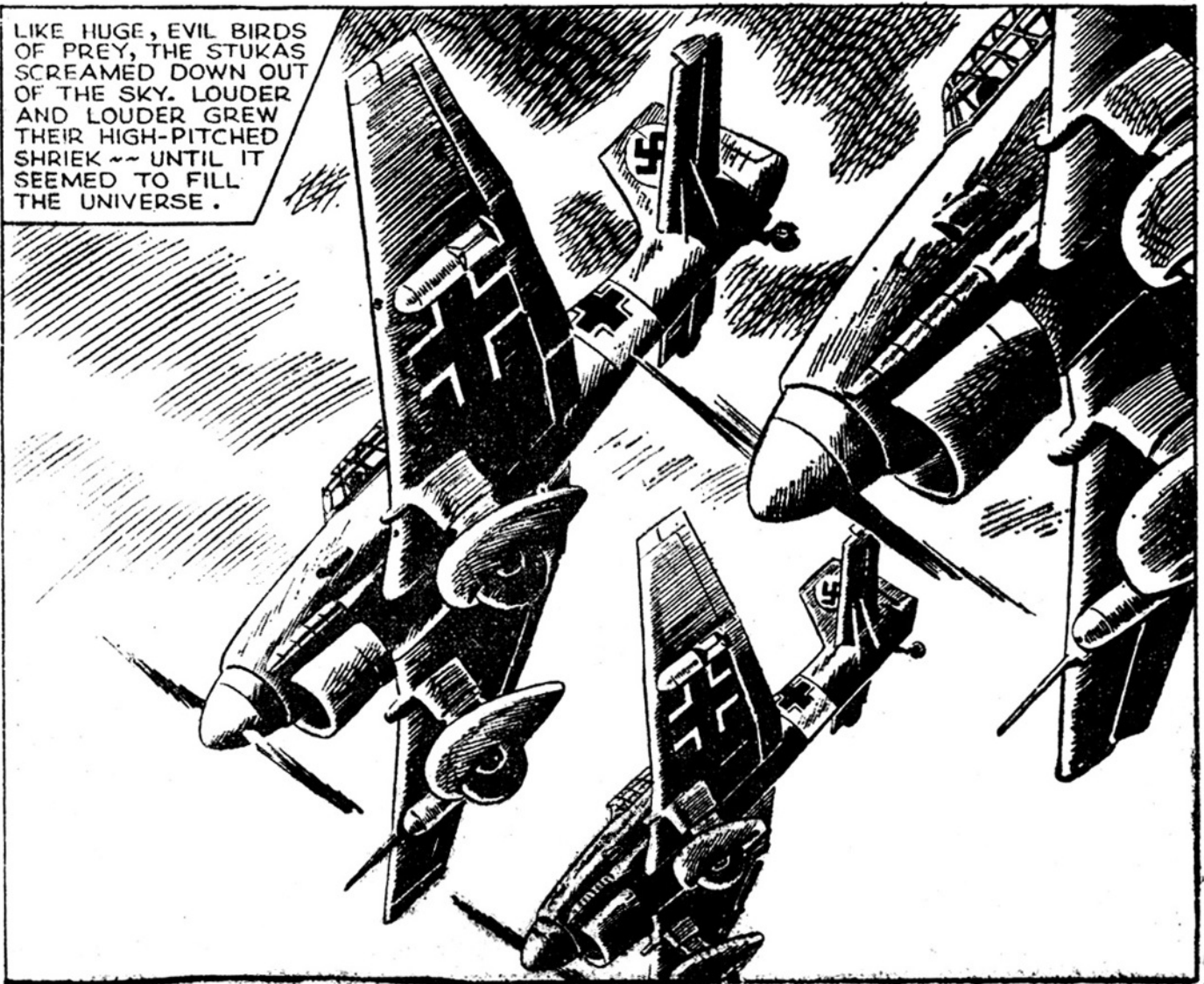
THAT'S WHAT IT'S FOR, LADDIE. YOU'VE GOT TO BE ABLE TO DO IT WITHOUT THINKING ~~ BECAUSE WHEN WE'RE UP AGAINST JERRY THERE'S NO TIME TO THINK!

BUT THE ACTION WAS NOT ALL MAKE-BELIEVE. NEXT MORNING, JUST BEFORE DAWN, A MENACING DRONE BROKE THE SILENCE -- A DRONE WHICH GREW INTO A ROAR!

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

STUKAS -- JERRY DIVE BOMBERS!

LIKE HUGE, EVIL BIRDS OF PREY, THE STUKAS SCREAMED DOWN OUT OF THE SKY. LOUDER AND LOUDER GREW THEIR HIGH-PITCHED SHRIEK ~~ UNTIL IT SEEMED TO FILL THE UNIVERSE.



THE STUKAS DIVED UNTIL IT SEEMED THAT THEY MUST BURY THEMSELVES IN THE GROUND. THEN, AT THE LAST MOMENT, THE PILOTS PULLED OUT OF THE DIVE AND RELEASED THEIR DEADLY CARGO OF BOMBS. AT THAT MOMENT, THE STUKAS WERE AT THEIR WEAKEST ~ AND THE VETERAN GUNNERS KNEW IT!



AS THE STUKAS DIVED, JIM BLAIR FELT NO FEAR... ONLY A MAD, BLAZING HATRED.

GOSH...IF ONLY I HAD A GUN I COULD REALLY HIT BACK WITH!



THE GUNNERS' COOLNESS PAID OFF...

GOT HIM!

THAT'LL TEACH 'EM TO COME CALLING BEFORE BREAKFAST!



THE RAID CAUSED LITTLE DAMAGE--AND THE GUNNERS LOOKED ON IT AS A NUISANCE, NOTHING MORE. BUT THE RAID HAD ONE SMALL RESULT.

MISTER BLAIR, WHEN STUKAS ATTACK, EVERYONE GETS UNDER COVER AND FIRES FROM THERE. I'D RATHER HAVE A LIVE OFFICER THAN A DEAD HERO AT THE MOMENT!

I'M SORRY, SIR. IT SHAN'T HAPPEN AGAIN.



Tank Alert



AS HE READ THE MESSAGE, THE COLONEL'S EYES GLINTED WITH THE LIGHT OF BATTLE!



Chapter 2. OVER OPEN SIGHTS

BACK INTO ACTION -- THIS WAS THE ORDER THE THIRTY-THIRD HAD BEEN WAITING FOR! SOON THE GUNS WERE ROLLING ALONG THE DESERT ROAD TOWARDS THE FRONT



Tank Alert

LATE IN THE DAY, THE THIRTY-THIRD REACHED THE BRIGADE AREA. A WELCOME ORDER WAS SHOUTED DOWN THE LONG COLUMN ~ AN ORDER WHICH NEVER HAD TO BE REPEATED ~ "BREW UP"!

YOU MEAN WE'RE GOING TO DRINK THAT? IT LOOKS AWFUL!

THIS TEA WILL PUT A NEW LINING IN YER STUMMICK, DICK BOY!



SOON OLD FRIENDS OF PREVIOUS BATTLES WANDERED OVER TO GREET THE THIRTY-THIRD...

T'IRTY T'IRD GUNNERS ~ WELCOME BACK.

THE CHAP WITH THE BEARD IS A SIKH. GREAT FIGHTERS ~ ESPECIALLY WITH THE BAYONET! THE OTHER'S A PATHAN ~ HE COULD CREEP UP ON A DARK NIGHT AND SHOOT YOU WITH YOUR OWN RIFLE!



I'M GLAD THEY'RE ON OUR SIDE!

MEANWHILE, AT DIVISIONAL H.Q., THE GENERAL WAS EXPLAINING THE PART THAT THE TIGER DIVISION WOULD PLAY IN THE FORTHCOMING BATTLE.

OUR JOB IS TO FORCE A GAP BETWEEN THESE TWO HUN DIVISIONS SO THAT THE ARMOUR CAN BREAK THROUGH. ZERO HOUR IS O-FOUR-HUNDRED HOURS TOMORROW!



LATE INTO THE NIGHT THE GUNNERS TOILED, DIGGING GUN-PITS, UNLOADING AMMUNITION AND CHECKING THEIR WEAPONS. IN THE DISTANCE, BURSTS OF MACHINE-GUN FIRE DISTURBED THE NIGHT. THE CEASELESS RUMBLE OF TANKS AND TRUCKS TOLD THE ENEMY THAT SOMETHING BIG WAS BREWING. AT LAST THE GUNNERS ROLLED THEMSELVES IN THEIR BLANKETS FOR A FEW BRIEF HOURS -- BUT DICK WAS TOO KEYED-UP FOR SLEEP.



HOPE I DON'T LET THE BOYS DOWN TOMORROW, TOM!

DON'T WORRY, CHUM-- YOU JUST KEEP FEEDING OLD ELIZA HERE WITH SHELLS AND YOU'LL BE ALL RIGHT! NOW LET'S GET A FEW HOURS OF SHUT-EYE!

TEN SECONDS TO ZERO HOUR! ALONG THE WHOLE FRONT, AN UNCANNY STILLNESS DESCENDED. EVERY MAN WAITED TENSELY AND PRAYED TO THE GOD OF BATTLES THAT HE WOULD PLAY HIS PART WELL.

THREE...
TWO...
ONE...

FIRE!

THE NIGHT ERUPTED INTO AN INFERNO OF VOLCANIC FLAME AS THE GUNS CRASHED INTO THE OPENING BARRAGE. AT THE SAME INSTANT, THE INFANTRY LEAPED FROM THEIR TRENCHES AND SURGED FORWARD...
THE BATTLE WAS ON!



THE GERMAN ARTILLERY SOON REPLIED AND RANGING ON THE FLASHES FROM THE BRITISH GUNS, BROUGHT DOWN HEAVY AND ACCURATE FIRE. BUT THE THIRTY-THIRD GUNNERS MIGHT HAVE BEEN AT GUN-DRILL!

GOSH--
WHAT WAS
THAT?

A SHELL--JERRY
EIGHTY-EIGHT! NOW
YOU KNOW WHY
WE DON'T COMPLAIN
ABOUT DIGGING
GUN-PITS!



AS THE GALLANT INFANTRY CLOSED ON THEIR OBJECTIVE, THE MURDEROUS BARRAGE LIFTED. WITH WILD, FIERCE YELLS, THE TIGERS RUSHED IN FOR THE KILL!

AIEEEH!



Tank Alert

THE TIGER DIVISION HAD DRIVEN A WEDGE DEEP INTO THE AFRIKA KORPS' FRONT. BUT ROMMEL WAS A RESOURCEFUL GENERAL—NOT EASILY PANICKED. HE MOVED HIS FORCES LIKE MEN ON A CHESSBOARD.

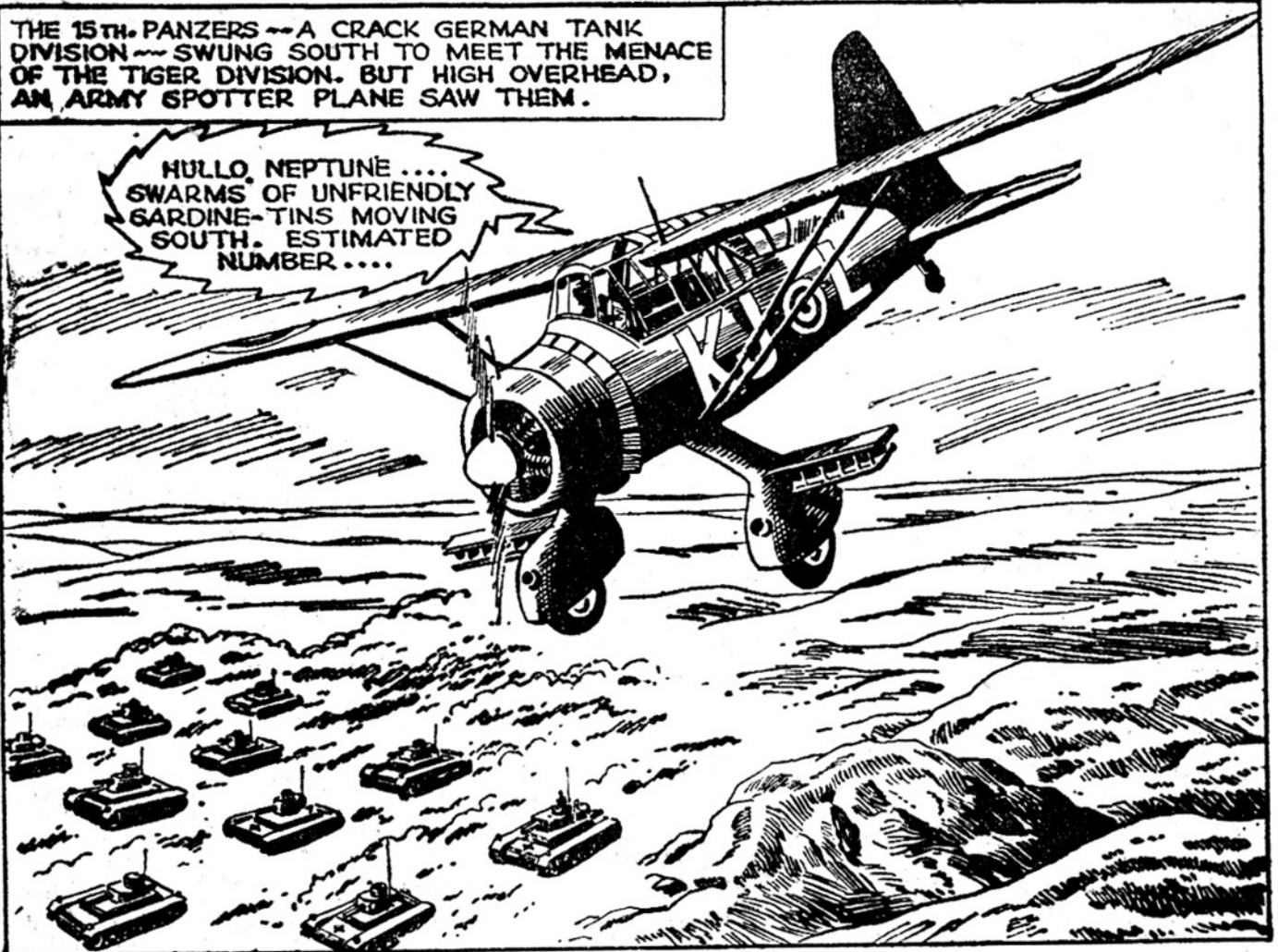
HERR GENERAL—THE TIGER DIVISION HAS THRUST DEEP INTO OUR CENTRE POSITION—AND IS STILL ADVANCING!

EXCELLENT! SEND THE FIFTEENTH PANZER DIVISION IN TO DESTROY THEM!



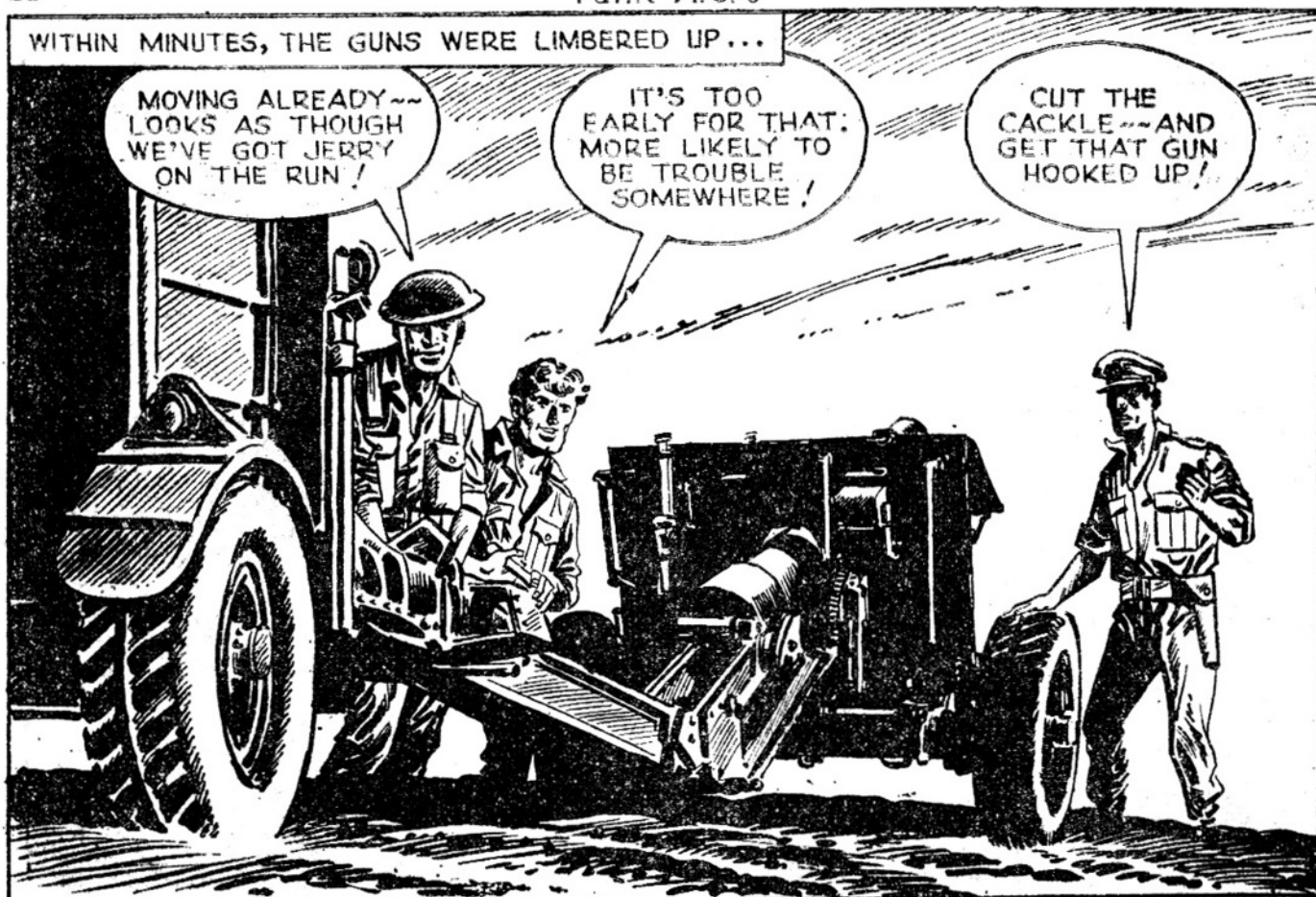
THE 15TH. PANZERS—A CRACK GERMAN TANK DIVISION—SWUNG SOUTH TO MEET THE MENACE OF THE TIGER DIVISION. BUT HIGH OVERHEAD, AN ARMY SPOTTER PLANE SAW THEM.

HULLO, NEPTUNE SWARMS OF UNFRIENDLY GARDINE-TINS MOVING SOUTH. ESTIMATED NUMBER





Tank Alert



AS JIM BLAIR LED HIS GUNS FORWARD, HE WAS HAILED BY AN INFANTRY OFFICER ...

THERE'S A WHOLE PANZER DIVISION HEADING THIS WAY-- THINK YOUR BOYS CAN STOP 'EM?

WE'LL HAVE A JOLLY GOOD TRY!



AS JIM TURNED AND MADE THE SIGNAL FOR TANK ACTION, THE GUNNERS LEAPED FROM THEIR TRUCKS. THERE WAS NO TIME TO PREPARE GUN-PITS ... OR SLIT-TRENCHES.

TANKS ... I *KNEW* THE EARLY MOVE MEANT TROUBLE!



JIM HASTILY BRIEFED HIS GUN-TEAMS...

LIE DOWN TILL
THEY GET WITHIN SIX
HUNDRED YARDS -- THEN
GET READY -- BUT DON'T
FIRE UNTIL I GIVE
THE WORD!

HERE
THEY COME,
SIR!



LYING BESIDE THE GUNS, THE GUNNERS
CAUGHT THEIR BREATH AS THE FIRST
GERMAN TANKS LUMBERED OVER
THE HORIZON LIKE MISSHAPEN
MONSTERS FROM ANOTHER WORLD.

FIFTEEN...TWENTY...
TWENTY-FIVE...GOSH,
THIS IS GOING TO BE
SOME PARTY!



THE LEADING TANKS SPOTTED THE BRITISH GUNS AND SWUNG TOWARDS THEM...

ACHTUNG!
BRITISH ARTILLERY!
THEY MUST BE
WIPED OUT!



THE GUNNERS HUGGED THE EARTH AS MURDEROUS FIRE FROM THE PANZERS SCREAMED AROUND THEM. KNEELING BESIDE NUMBER ONE GUN, JIM WATCHED THE ENEMY ROLL NEARER... NEARER...

SIX-FIFTY...
SIX HUNDRED...
TAKE
POST!

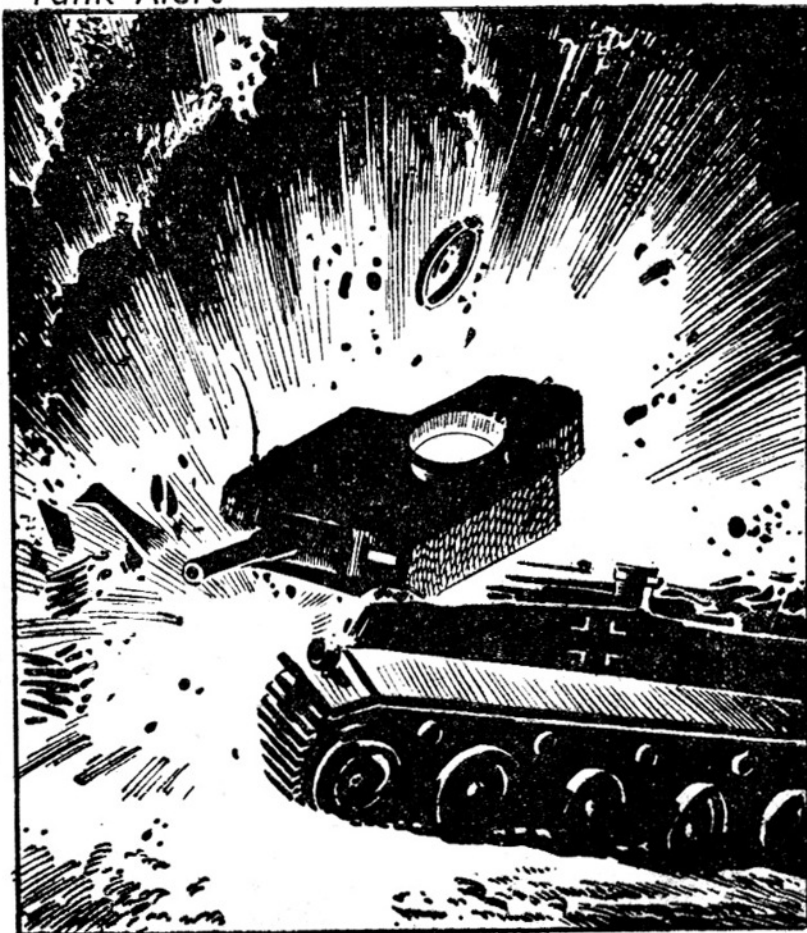


EVERY GUNNER LEAPED TO HIS POST. THROUGH THE TELESCOPIC SIGHTS, THE GUN-LAYERS TRAINED ON THEIR TARGETS. CLOSER... CLOSER... ROARED THE GERMAN TANKS...

RANGE
FOUR-FIFTY!

ON!





THE FOUR GUNS OF JIM'S TROOP HAD BARKED WITH ONE VOICE ~ AND THE FIRST FOUR GERMAN TANKS STOPPED DEAD AS THE SHELLS CRASHED INTO THEM AT POINT-BLANK RANGE. BUT THERE WAS NO JUBILATION. MORE AND MORE TANKS WERE SWARMING OVER THE HORIZON AND OUT IN THE OPEN, THE GUNNERS WERE PAYING A HEAVY PRICE FOR THEIR GALLANTRY.

NUMBER FOUR GUN'S HAD A DIRECT HIT! GET A TRUCK UP TO PICK UP THE WOUNDED!

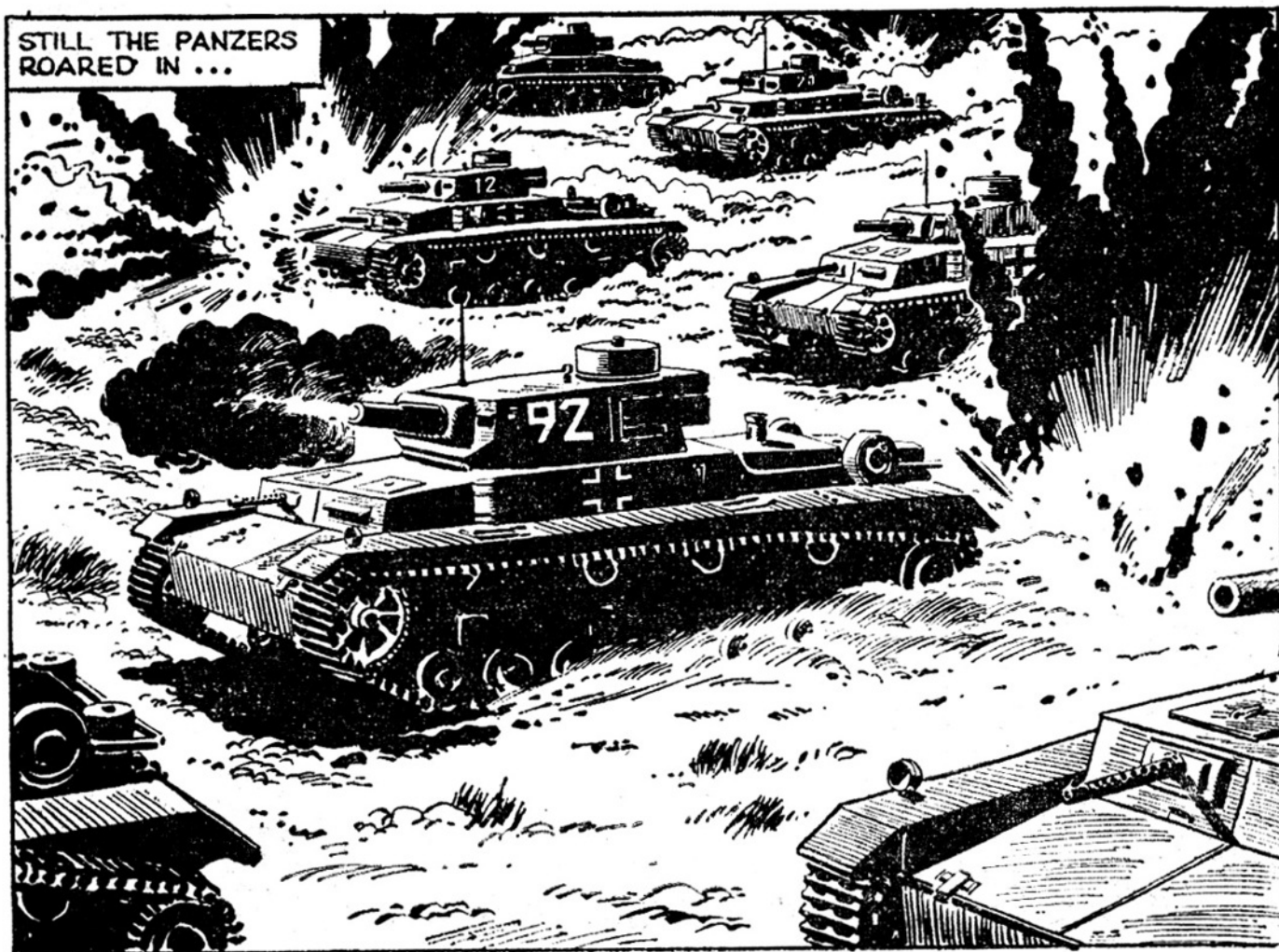


THROUGH A HAIL OF FIRE, JIM RACED TOWARDS THE STRICKEN GUN. IF IT WAS CAPABLE OF FIRING, HE WAS DETERMINED IT SHOULD. HE PAUSED BY DICK'S GUN...



BY THE TIME DICK REACHED THE GUN, JIM HAD SATISFIED HIMSELF THAT IT COULD STILL BE FIRED. BUT IT WOULD BE A BIG TASK FOR ONLY TWO MEN.





...AND THE IMPOSSIBLE HAPPENED! THE TANKS FALTERED ~ THEN SWUNG AROUND AND TURNED TAIL!

THEY'RE RUNNING! WE'VE BEATEN THE PERISHERS!



OVER THERE ~ IT'S OUR TANKS!

THE THIRTY-THIRD'S HEROIC STAND HAD ENABLED THE LIGHTLY ARMoured BRITISH TANKS TO GET CLOSE TO THE PANZERS AND GRAPPLE WITH THEM ON LEVEL TERMS. IN FRONT OF THE GUNS, THE DESERT WAS LITTERED WITH WRECKED AND BURNING TANKS.

TWENTY-SEVEN WE KNOCKED OUT. I RECKON THAT'S GIVEN ROMMEL SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT!

AND WE GOT FOUR OF 'EM OURSELVES!



NEXT MORNING, JIM GLANCED TOWARDS THE DISABLED GERMAN TANKS--THEN HE STIFFENED ...

GORDON--HOW MANY TANKS DID WE COUNT KNOCKED OUT LAST NIGHT?

TWENTY-SEVEN, SIR. WHY?

NOW JIM COUNTED THIRTY! THE WILY GERMANS HAD MANOEUVRED THREE FIGHTING TANKS UP DURING THE NIGHT--READY TO CREATE HAVOC AMONG THE UNSUSPECTING GUNNERS.

YOUR TARGET IS THAT TANK BY THE SMALL CAIRN... BUT DON'T LET HIM SMELL A RAT. FOR ONCE YOU CAN FORGET GUN-DRILL. JUST LOAD AND CASUALLY SWING THE GUN TOWARDS HIM.

NO GUN-DRILL? WELL, I SUPPOSE IT'S THE ONLY WAY, SIR!

THIS'LL BREAK THE SARGE'S HEART!

THE GUNS CRASHED OUT--AND THE THREE INTRUDERS WERE SOON BLAZING WRECKS.

THE CRAFTY SO-AND-SO'S! THEY WON'T TRY THAT AGAIN!



BUT THE GUNNERS HAD LITTLE TIME TO RELAX AND ENJOY THEIR TRIUMPH. FOR THE TIDE OF BATTLE WAS SWEEPING FORWARD.

ORDERS, SIR ~ WE'RE TO MOVE FORWARD.

PREPARE TO MOVE!



THE WEARY GUNNERS SNATCHED SHORT CAT-NAAPS AS THE TRUCKS JOLTED OVER THE DESERT IN THE WAKE OF THE RETREATING AFRIKA KORPS.

WATCH THE POT-HOLES ~ WE'RE TRYING TO SLEEP!

IF I'D KNOWN, I'D HAVE HAD 'EM FILLED IN FOR YOU!



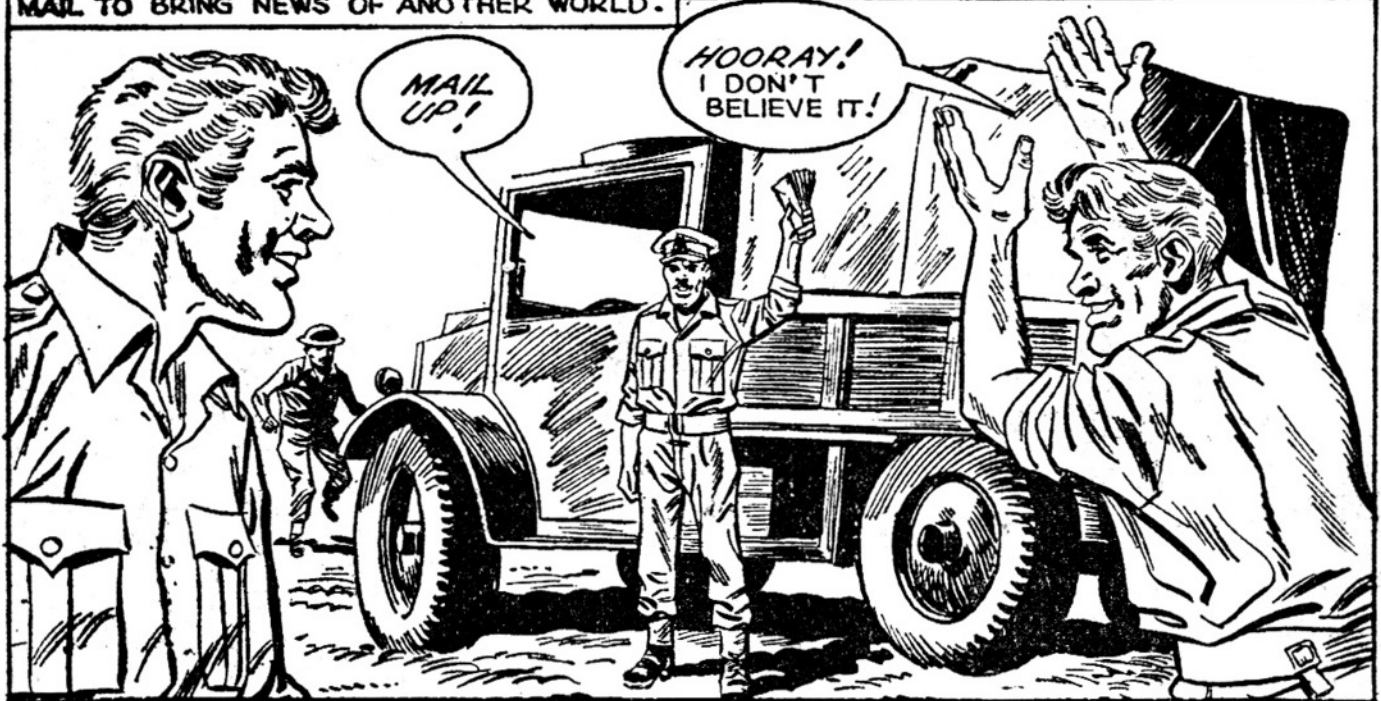
AND OVER THE RADIO CRACKLED A MESSAGE FROM DIVISIONAL H.Q. WHICH BROUGHT A THRILL OF PRIDE TO EVERY MAN...

AND THE GALLANTRY AND STUBBORN DEFENCE OF THESE GUNNERS WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN CAUSING THE BREAK-THROUGH. WELL DONE, THIRTY-THIRD!



Chapter 3. FLYING COLUMN

BUT THE BATTLE WAS FAR FROM OVER. IN FACT, FOR THE NEXT SIX MONTHS, IT WAS TO RAGE UP AND DOWN THE DESERT, FROM BEYOND BENGHAZI BACK TO THE EGYPTIAN BORDER. TERRITORIAL GAINS WERE MEANINGLESS. THE ONLY THING THAT COUNTED WAS THE DESTRUCTION OF THE ENEMY AND AS EXPERTS IN THIS ART, THE TIGER DIVISION WAS ALWAYS IN THE FOREFRONT OF THE 'BENGHAZI HANDICAP', AS THE TROOPS CALLED IT. IT BEGAN TO SEEM THAT THIS WAS THE ONLY LIFE THE SOLDIERS HAD EVER KNOWN... THE BITTER DESERT, FIERCE ACTION AND FRUSTRATING BOREDOM--WITH ONLY OCCASIONAL MAIL TO BRING NEWS OF ANOTHER WORLD.



FOR JIM BLAIR, THE MAIL BROUGHT GRIM NEWS...





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THE COLUMN WAS TO BE COMMANDED BY CAPTAIN DYER OF THE RAJPUT RIFLES. DYER WAS A BORN SOLDIER -- A MAN WHO WOULD SPARE NO ONE, INCLUDING HIMSELF, IN ORDER TO CARRY OUT HIS TASK.



JIM'S HEART THROBBED EXCITEDLY AS HE LISTENED TO DYER OUTLINING THE PLAN AS COOLLY AS IF HE WERE DISCUSSING ARRANGEMENTS FOR A PICNIC.

THE EIGHTH ARMY INTEND TO PUSH ROMMEL BACK PAST BENGHAZI. BUT THEY WANT TO DIVERT HIS ATTENTION -- AND SOME OF HIS STRENGTH -- SOUTHWARDS. WE'RE ONE OF A NUMBER OF FLYING COLUMNS -- AND OUR JOB IS TO MAKE AS MUCH NUISANCE OF OURSELVES AS POSSIBLE, TO GIVE THE IMPRESSION THAT AN ATTACK IS DEVELOPING IN THE SOUTH.

ALL RIGHT?

IT COULDN'T BE BETTER!



A FEW MOMENTS LATER THE GALLANT CAVALCADE SET OUT INTO THE HARSH, TRACKLESS DESERT. TWO BREN GUN CARRIERS, A FEW LORRY-LOADS OF INFANTRY AND FOUR GUNS ~ READY IF NEED BE TO TAKE ON THE WHOLE AFRIKA KORPS!



LATE IN THE DAY, THE COLUMN LEAGUERED IN A HOLLOW DEEP IN THE HEART OF THE DESERT.

THERE'S AN OASIS A FEW MILES NORTH OF HERE ~ EL'OMA. IT'S CERTAIN TO BE HELD BY JERRY ~ BUT IF WE CAN CLEAR HIM OUT, IT WILL BE A GOOD BASE FOR US. LET'S TAKE THE JEEP AND HAVE A LOOK AT IT.

CHAR, SAHIB!





THE RAYS FROM THE GLARING SUN CAUGHT THE LENS OF JIM'S FIELD-GLASSES AND THE FLASH WAS SPOTTED FROM THE OASIS.

THERE IS SOMEONE ON THAT HILL! FELDWEBEL, TAKE A SCOUT CAR AND INVESTIGATE!

JAWHOL, HERR MAJOR!

THE GERMAN ARMoured CAR RACED TOWARDS THE RIDGE AND THE TWO BRITISH OFFICERS DECIDED IT WAS TIME TO MOVE.

WE CAN EASILY GIVE HIM THE SLIP IN THIS BROKEN COUNTRY!

I'VE GOT A BETTER IDEA, SIR!

AS JIM BEGAN TO OUTLINE HIS PLAN, A BURST OF MACHINE-GUN FIRE FROM THE GERMAN CAR'S SPANDAUS RIPPED OVER THEIR HEADS!

LET'S LEAD HIM BACK TO OUR POSITION. I'LL ALERT THE GUNS OVER THE RADIO AND THEY'LL MAKE SHORT WORK OF HIM!

GOOD IDEA!



Tank Alert

HOTLY PURSUED BY THE GERMAN SCOUT CAR, THE JEEP BOUNCED OVER THE UNEVEN GROUND.

HOLD TIGHT!

STAND BY FOR A TARGET, GUNNERS~~ WE'RE BRINGING YOU BACK A SARDINE-TIN FOR SUPPER!



BACK AT THE LEAGUER, THE BATTERY SERGEANT-MAJOR ROUSED THE GUNNERS.

TAKE POST! THE SKIPPER'S GOT A TARGET FOR US!

NO PEACE FOR THE WICKED!



A FEW MINUTES LATER, THE JEEP RACED INTO VIEW ...

HERE COMES THE SKIPPER WITH A JERRY AFTER HIM!

HE'S LEADING HIM RIGHT ON TO US!



THEN, WITHIN SIGHT OF SUCCESS...

THEY'VE HIT A TYRE -- WE'VE HAD IT NOW!



THE CRIPPLED JEEP STRUGGLED GAMELY ON-- BUT THE GERMAN ARMoured CAR WAS GAINING RAPIDLY. AND AT THAT RANGE, IT WAS AN ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TARGET FOR THE GUNS.

IT'S A HUNDRED TO ONE AGAINST OUR HITTING HIM FIRST TIME AT THIS RANGE!



WE'VE GOT TO HIT HIM FIRST TIME! TWELVE HUNDRED... LEAD A HALF... FIRE!



THE GUNNERS WAITED TENSELY AS THE SHELL SCREAMED TOWARDS ITS TARGET. THEN ...

DIRECT HIT! YOUR BOYS CERTAINLY KNOW THEIR STUFF, BLAIR!





A FEW MINUTES LATER THE JEEP LIMPED INTO THE POSITION.

YOU ALL RIGHT, SIR?

FINE -- THANKS TO YOUR NEAT SHOOTING! I'LL STAND YOU ALL A BLOW-OUT WHEN WE GET BACK TO ALEX!

AS NIGHT FELL, CAPTAIN DYER OUTLINED HIS PLAN -- THE DESTRUCTION OF A WHOLE MOTORISED BRIGADE BY A MERE HANDFUL OF MEN.

WE'LL PUT IN A SILENT ATTACK. THEN WHEN THEY MAKE FOR THEIR TRUCKS, YOUR GUNS WILL OPEN UP ON THE VEHICLES. YOU'D BETTER COME WITH ME IN CASE WE SHOULD NEED ANY ARTILLERY SUPPORT, THOUGH. YOU'LL NEED A SIGNALLER WITH A RADIO.

RIGHT!



AS JIM WENT BACK TO BRIEF HIS MEN, HE REALISED THAT BOTH HIS REGULAR SIGNALLERS WOULD BE NEEDED ON THEIR OWN SETS.

CAN ANY OF YOU WORK A RADIO -- NUMBER EIGHTEEN SET?

NOT ME, SIR!

I CAN, SIR -- I'M A TRAINED SIGNALLER!





THE SMALL FORCE GATHERED FOR THE ATTACK ON THE CREST OVERLOOKING THE OASIS. THEN SILENTLY THEY BEGAN TO WORK THEIR WAY DOWN ON THE ENEMY...





THE TIGERS REACHED THE LEVEL GROUND -- TO BE PINNED DOWN BY A VICIOUS HAIL OF WHITE-HOT LEAD AS MACHINE-GUNS RAKED THE AREA.



TAKING ADVANTAGE OF EVERY SCRAP OF COVER, THE R.A. LIEUTENANT AND DICK GORDON WORKED THEIR WAY TOWARDS THE HILL.



MADLY THEY DASHED FORWARD...



THEN, AS THEY BEGAN TO CLIMB TO THE TOP, DICK PAUSED ...



GO ON...
WHAT ARE
YOU WAITING
FOR?

HOLD IT,
SIR... I CAN
HEAR JERRY
VOICES!

JIM INCHED FORWARD AND SAW THE SILHOUETTES OF GERMAN SOLDIERS AGAINST THE NIGHT SKY.



THEY'RE
SETTING UP
A MACHINE-
GUN!

AND FROM
HERE THEY'LL
BE ABLE TO
SLAUGHTER THE
RAJPUTS! WE'VE
GOT TO DO
SOMETHING
ABOUT THIS!

JIM BLAIR CURSED HIS FOLLY IN NOT CARRYING A COUPLE OF GRENADES. NOW THERE WAS ONLY ONE WAY TO DEAL WITH THE GERMANS!



WE'LL GET AS
CLOSE AS WE CAN,
THEN WE'LL RUSH
'EM!

RIGHT,
SIR!

Tank Alert

THE TWO GUNNERS REACHED THE TOP JUST AS THE GERMAN MACHINE-GUN BEGAN TO SPIT DEATH AT THE RAJPUTS. INSTANTLY THEY LEAPED IN ON THE GERMANS ...



JIM'S PISTOL MADE SHORT WORK OF ONE GERMAN. ANOTHER LUNGED HIS BAYONET TOWARDS DICK WITH A VICIOUS SNARL, BUT THE GUNNER PARRIED THE THRUST AND STRUCK HOME. THE THIRD GERMAN RAN!



THE ARTILLERY OFFICER LOST NO TIME IN PASSING FIRE ORDERS TO THE WAITING GUNS ...

RIGHT~~ FIRE ORDERS!
TROOP TARGET H.E.
CHARGE THREE ZERO ONE
O DEGREES . . . RIGHT
RANGING FOUR-TWO
HUNDRED FIRE!

SHOT,
SIR!



THE FIRST RANGING SHOT WAS DEAD ON TARGET~~ AND SECONDS LATER, A SALVO OF SHELLS HURTLED DOWN ON THE GERMAN CONCENTRATIONS. AS THE GERMAN MACHINE-GUN FIRE SLACKENED~~ *THE RAJPUTS CHARGED!*



Tank Alert

JIM BLAIR WATCHED THE MAGNIFICENT CHARGE JUBILANTLY; FOR HIS GUNS HAD MADE IT POSSIBLE !



AS THE GERMANS STORMED UP THE HILL, DICK REMEMBERED THE ENEMY SPANDAU. HE SWUNG IT ROUND TO MEET THE ATTACKERS.



THE TWO GUNNERS REJOINED THE MAIN PARTY, TO FIND THE RAJPUTS IN POSSESSION OF THE OASIS. BUT IN THE MOMENT OF TRIUMPH, DISASTER HAD STRUCK CAPTAIN DYER.

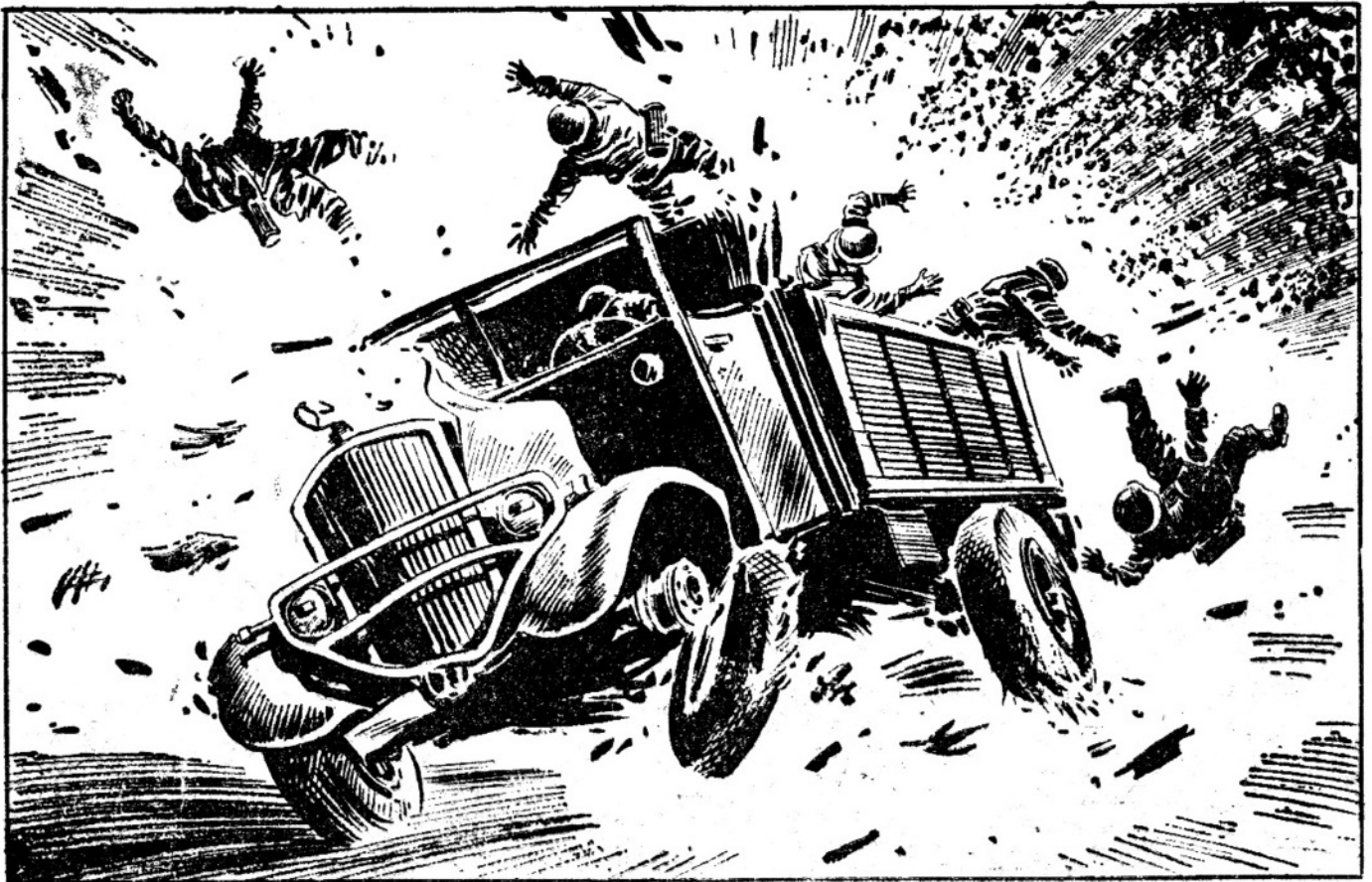


AS JIM TURNED TO HURRY AWAY, A FEEBLE GESTURE FROM DYER RESTRAINED HIM.



Chapter 4 **BATTLE AT THE OASIS**

THE STRENGTH AND FURY OF THE ATTACK HAD CONVINCED THE GERMANS THAT A REALLY BIG FORCE WAS CRASHING IN ON THEM. THEY RAN HELTER-SKELTER FOR THEIR TRUCKS—JUST AS THE GUNNERS PUT DOWN A HEAVY CONCENTRATION OF FIRE ON THEIR WAGON LINES. TRUCK AFTER TRUCK WAS HIT AND BURST INTO FLAMES, AND PANIC SET IN...



THE SHATTERED REMNANTS OF THE GERMAN BRIGADE RACED BLINDLY INTO THE DESERT, LEAVING THE TIGERS IN POSSESSION OF THE OASIS. SURPRISE AND DARING HAD PAID OFF AGAIN ~~~ BUT THE COST HAD BEEN HEAVY.

WHERE IS CAPTAIN DYER?

THE CAPTAIN IS DEAD, SAHIB!



JIM FELT A STAB OF GRIEF AT THE GRIM NEWS. IN THE SHORT TIME THEY HAD BEEN TOGETHER, HE HAD DEVELOPED A TREMENDOUS RESPECT AND LIKING FOR THE TOUGH REGULAR. THEN HE THRUST PERSONAL FEELING BEHIND HIM. THE DEATH OF DYER MEANT THAT JIM WAS IN COMMAND ~~~ AND THERE WAS MUCH TO BE DONE. FOR ONE THING WAS CERTAIN ~~~ THE GERMANS WOULD BE BACK.

NOW WE'VE GOT THIS OASIS, WE'LL HOLD IT! B PLATOON ~~~ LAY A MINEFIELD AND PUT UP BARBED WIRE ROUND THE PERIMETER. SERGEANT WOOD-- GET THE GUNS DUG IN, THE REMAINDER WILL DIG WEAPON-TRENCHES.



RIGHT, SIR!

TEEKAI, SAHIB!

Tank Alert

THROUGH THE REMAINING HOURS OF DARKNESS, THE WEARY WARRIORS TOILED. BUT THERE WAS NO COMPLAINT. THEY KNEW THEIR VERY LIVES MIGHT DEPEND ON THE STRENGTH OF THEIR DEFENCES.



WHILE THE TROOPS RESTED, JIM WENT ALONE TO PAY HIS LAST TRIBUTE TO A GALLANT OFFICER.



THE EXPECTED RETURN OF THE GERMANS WAS NOT LONG DELAYED. JIM HAD SCARCELY SIPPED HIS TEA WHEN THERE WAS A CRY FROM THE FORWARD OBSERVATION POST.



IT WAS SOON CLEAR THAT THE APPROACHING FORCE WAS A LARGE ONE.



JIM FELT SAVAGELY JUBILANT. THE COLUMN'S TASK WAS TO DRAW AS MANY OF ROMMEL'S FORCES AS POSSIBLE TO THE SOUTH, SO THAT THE EIGHTH ARMY COULD BREAK THROUGH IN THE NORTH. AND IT LOOKED AS THOUGH THEY HAD SUCCEEDED.

GET THIS THROUGH TO DIVISION... HAVE CAPTURED EL OMA OASIS. NOW ABOUT TO ENGAGE HEAVY ARMoured FORCE... HOPE THE BIG SHOW IS GOING WELL ...



BUT JIM BLAIR'S HOPES WERE VAIN ONES! THE AFRIKA KORPS HAD BEEN HEAVILY REINFORCED—AND ROMMEL, WITH OVERWHELMING SUPERIORITY ON THE GROUND AND IN THE AIR, WAS FORCING THE EIGHTH ARMY BACK. WHICH MEANT THAT THE FLYING COLUMN OF THE RAJPUTS WAS NOW MILES BEHIND ENEMY LINES! JIM LISTENED TENSELY AS THE GRIM STORY REACHED THEM OVER THE RADIO.



THE YOUNG GUNNER OFFICER WAS FACED WITH A DIFFICULT DECISION. THE ORDERS THAT HE HAD JUST RECEIVED MEANT THAT HE COULD ORDER AN IMMEDIATE WITHDRAWAL—WITH A POSSIBLE CHANCE OF GETTING HIS SMALL FORCE BACK INTACT. TO STAY AND FIGHT IT OUT MEANT ALMOST CERTAIN ANNIHILATION. YET THEY WERE IN A STRONG POSITION—AND COULD CERTAINLY ACCOUNT FOR MANY TIMES THEIR OWN NUMBER OF GERMANS BEFORE THEY WERE OVER-RUN. A PICTURE OF CAPTAIN DYER CAME INTO JIM'S MIND, AND AT ONCE HE KNEW WHAT HIS DECISION MUST BE.



AFTER THEIR MAULING OF THE PREVIOUS NIGHT, THE GERMANS WERE TAKING NO CHANCES WITH THE FORCE AT THE OASIS. AS THEIR TANKS NOSED CAUTIOUSLY FORWARD, A HEAVY BARRAGE OF EIGHTY-EIGHTS CRASHED DOWN. BUT THANKS TO THE THOROUGH PREPARATIONS, CASUALTIES WERE FEW!



FOR A FEW MOMENTS THE GERMAN TANKS NOSED ABOUT THE EDGE OF THE MINEFIELD ~ THEN THEY PULLED BACK. THE REASON SOON BECAME OBVIOUS.



THE UGLY DIVE BOMBERS PEELED OFF AND CAME SHRIEKING DOWN...





THE GUNNERS FEVERISHLY LOADED AND FIRED -- BUT FOR EVERY TANK THEY KNOCKED OUT, ANOTHER TWO POURED THROUGH THE GAP IN THE MINEFIELD.

GET HIM OUT OF THAT SEAT! GORDON, TAKE OVER AS LAYER!

I'M HIT!



LIKE RELENTLESS JUGGERNAUTS, THE TANKS ROARED IN. THE INFANTRY LEAPED FROM THEIR BACKS, READY TO CLOSE IN FOR THE KILL.



JUST AS THE END OF THE GALLANT LITTLE GARRISON SEEMED ONLY MINUTES AWAY, A FIERCE WIND BLEW UP--WHIPPING GREAT CLOUDS OF SAND HIGH INTO THE AIR AND ENVELOPING THE BATTLEFIELD IN A STIFLING, STINGING BLACKNESS. THE MIGHT OF THE DESERT FORCED A TRUCE ON BOTH SIDES.

A SANDSTORM!
THIS MAY BE
OUR CHANCE!



GROPING HIS WAY BLINDLY FROM POSITION TO POSITION, JIM YELLED HIS PLAN INTO THE EARS OF THE ASTONDED TROOPS ...

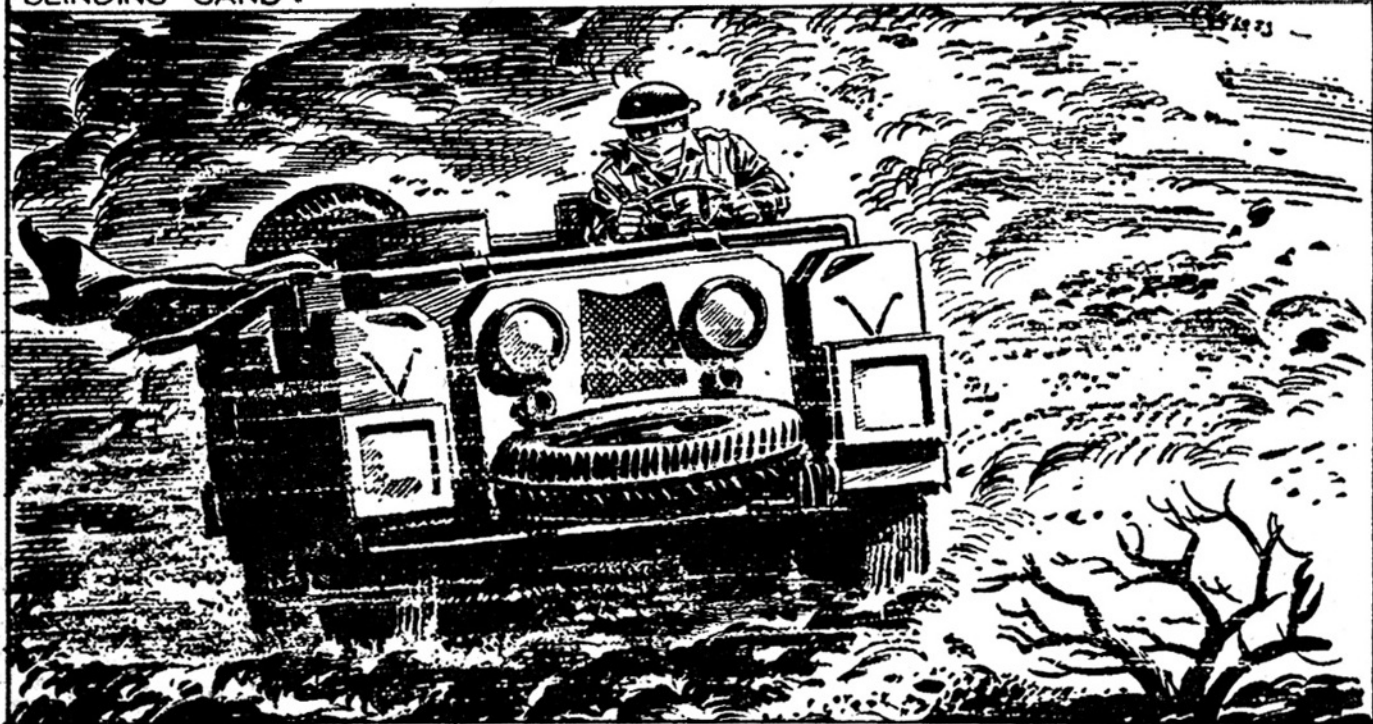
GET LIMBERED UP--
WE'RE PULLING OUT!
KEEP GOING EAST--
AND GOOD LUCK!



RIGHT; SIR--
SEE YOU BACK
AT THE DIV
POSITION--I HOPE!

Tank Alert

AS THE SANDSTORM RAGED WITH EVER-INCREASING FURY, THE ORDER TO MOVE WAS PASSED FROM MAN TO MAN. SOMEHOW THE GUNS WERE HOOKED UP AND THE TROOPS CLAMBERED ABOARD THEIR VEHICLES. WITH ONLY A ROUGH COMPASS BEARING TO GUIDE THEM, THEY INCHED FORWARD THROUGH THE BLINDING SAND.



FOR OVER TWO HOURS THE SANDSTORM RAGED. THEN, AS SUDDENLY AS IT HAD STARTED, IT FINISHED. WITH HIS FIELD GLASSES HELD TO ANXIOUS EYES, JIM RAKED THE DESERT. HE GAVE A GREAT SIGH OF THANKFULNESS, FOR NEARLY ALL THE FORCE WAS THERE -- WIDELY SCATTERED, BUT SAFE! AT LEAST, SAFE SO FAR -- FOR THEY STILL HAD TO CRASH THROUGH THE GERMAN LINES!



JIM SIGNALLLED THE SCATTERED CONVOY TO CLOSE IN. THEN HE OUTLINED HIS PLAN.

WE'LL MOVE OFF AT NIGHTFALL. IF WE FALL IN WITH ANY JERRY TRANSPORT, GO ALONG WITH 'EM. IF YOU'RE CHALLENGED, TRY TO BLUFF IT OUT -- BUT IF THEY TUMBLE YOU, THEN GET YOUR FOOT DOWN -- HARD!



IMMEDIATELY THE CURTAIN OF NIGHT FELL ON THE DESERT, THE COLUMN MOVED OFF, THE TROOPS CROUCHED LOW IN THEIR VEHICLES. BOTH SIDES USED CAPTURED VEHICLES AND WEAPONS, SO THEY WOULDN'T AROUSE SUSPICION -- BUT THEIR UNIFORMS WOULD!



AS JIM'S TRUCK TOPPED A CREST...



BUT A BURLY FIGURE MOVED INTO THE CENTRE OF THE TRACK, ARM UPRAISED. IT LOOKED AS THOUGH THE GAME WAS UP!



AS THE TRUCKS SLOWED DOWN, THE GERMAN STROLLED OVER TO JIM'S SIDE. HIS EYES WIDENED AS HE SAW ENEMY UNIFORMS AND HE OPENED HIS MOUTH TO SHOUT A WARNING... BUT JIM'S FIST SHOT OUT—AND THE GERMAN CRUMPLED ON TO THE TRACK....



THEN BEGAN A WILD RIDE THROUGH THE NIGHT. STARTLED SHOUTS AND SHOTS BEHIND THEM TOLD JIM THAT FURTHER BLUFF WAS USELESS. BUMPING AND SWAYING THEY TORE ON...



THE RETURNING COLUMN GOT A GREAT WELCOME WHEN THEY REACHED THE TIGER'S POSITION. AND JIM LEARNED THAT THEIR EXPLOITS HAD HAD A VERY DEFINITE EFFECT ON THE COURSE OF THE BATTLE.

YOUR LITTLE SHOW FORCED ROMMEL TO DETACH A BIG PART OF HIS ARMOUR FROM HIS MAIN FORCE -- AND THAT GAVE THE EIGHTH ARMY A CHANCE TO COUNTER-ATTACK! WELL DONE, BLAIR -- I'M PUTTING YOU IN FOR A MILITARY CROSS!

THANK YOU, SIR! I'D LIKE TO RECOMMEND THAT GUNNER GORDON BE AWARDED THE MILITARY MEDAL. HIS CONDUCT THROUGHOUT HAS BEEN OUTSTANDING!



OUR STORY ENDS HERE -- BUT THE SAGA OF THE TIGER DIVISION AND ITS BATTLES WENT ON. THROUGH THE BITTER DESERT STRUGGLE, THE GRIM SHAMBLES OF KNIGHTSBRIDGE AND THE CAULDRON, THROUGH THE TURNING OF THE TIDE AT EL ALAMEIN -- AND ON TO TUNIS! THEN ACROSS THE MEDITERRANEAN TO SICILY AND ITALY. THE DIVISION WROTE HISTORY -- AND WROTE IT IN BLOOD! AND WITH THEM MARCHED JIM BLAIR AND DICK GORDON -- NO LONGER NOVICES, BUT WORTHY COMRADES AMONG MEN WHOSE HERITAGE WAS FIGHTING!

PHEEP!

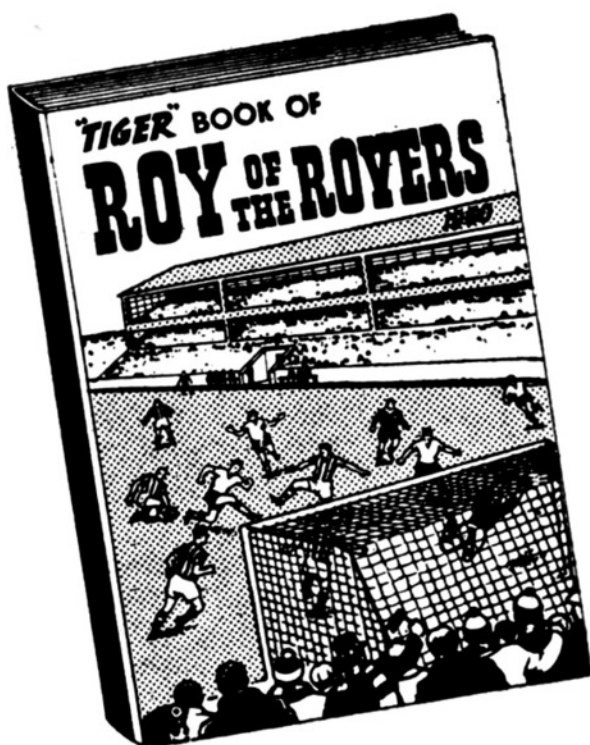
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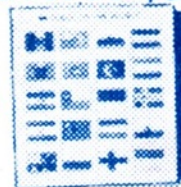
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